

ASSEMBLY BILL 2649

Kinship Support Services Program (KSSP)

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ISSUE

When parents can no longer care for their child, relatives often assume responsibility in order to keep the family together and prevent the child from having to enter out-of-home care.

California's Kinship Support Services Program (KSSP) assists relatives in raising foster children who are at risk of dependency or delinquency. The program allocates funds to create these services in many communities throughout the state. Services can include: support groups, respite, information and referral, recreation, mentoring/tutoring, assistance with furniture, clothing, and food, transportation, legal assistance, and many other support services needed by kin families.

Yet, despite the recognition of both the importance and growing use for kinship care, the state's eligibility requirements hinder KSSP from fully assisting relatives who wish to maintain family cohesion.

EXISTING LAW

Existing law requires the State Department of Social Services to conduct a Kinship Support Services Program that is a grants-in-aid program providing startup and expansion funds for local kinship support services programs that provide community-based family support services to kinship caregivers and the at risk children.

The counties participating in the KSSP program must meet specified requirements. Currently, state law limits the eligibility for state funds to start a KSSP to those counties that have 40% or more of their dependent children (those in the custody of the child welfare agency) living with relatives.

THIS BILL

AB 2649 addresses this limitation per seeking to delete the requirement that a participating county have 40% or more of dependant children in relative care placements.

This year, the Governor's Budget increases the KSSP program from \$1.5 million to \$5 million. This measure intends to take this expansion and appropriately allocate funds to relative caregivers who meet the eligibility requirements rather than depend on the arbitrary percentage of caregivers within a county.

SUMMARY

AB 2649 would delete the requirement that a participating county have 40% or more of dependent children in relative care placements in order to receive funding from the KSSP.

BACKGROUND

- Kinship Supportive Services Program was first established in 1997 to fund public/private partnerships with State general fund dollars leveraging private community funds.

- Currently, 11 counties participate in this program including - Alameda, Contra Costa, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Monterey, Riverside, San Bernardino, San Diego, San Mateo, Santa Clara, and Stanislaus .
- KSSP programs serve and support families both within and outside of the *formalized* child welfare system. This vital support is able to prevent families from coming into the foster care system.
- The result of this collaboration and community involvement is an extremely cost-effective program that prevents relatives from entering the child welfare system, supports them while in foster care, and sustains permanent placements when relatives have exited the system.
- Between October 2001 to January 2003, KSSP programs have provided more than 6,000 children and caregivers with more than 90,000 individualized services.
- Since 2000, KSSP sites have also served children who have exited foster care and their relatives, stabilizing these important and permanent placements, and preventing re-entry into the foster care system.

Kinship Care in California

- As of January 2001, 43% of the foster care population is placed with relative caregivers
- Most children in kin care are supported by one of their grandmothers—nearly 30% of these caregivers are over 60 years old
- Kinship caregivers are often living on a fixed or limited income and need significant financial assistance
- The best available State and Federal

evidence illustrate that youth placed with relatives experience fewer placements, fare better emotionally and physically, perform better in school, and maintain a higher level of connection to their culture and family.

- Sibling groups are more likely to be placed together in Kinship Care than any other type of placement.

SUPPORT

California Alliance of Children and Families Services
 California State Association of Counties
 Chief Probation Officers of California
 Community Coalition
 California Welfare Director's Association
 Edgewood Family Centers
 National Association of Social Workers
 National Center For Youth Law
 Service Employees International Union

OPPOSITION

None on file

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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